

M. CLEMENCEAU WRITES OF HIS TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA

(Copyright, 1911 by The New York Times Company.)

M. Georges Clemenceau, the famous ex-Prime Minister of France, has made a voyage of discovery to South America. He went there, both as statesman and traveler, to ascertain for himself the facts about the least known of continents. We North Americans, to our shame, know less of South America even than we do of Africa. M. Clemenceau proposes to enlighten us.

He has written for THE NEW YORK TIMES a series of articles describing what he found in South America. They are written with the brilliant vivacity that characterizes the work of so many of the French writers and statesmen. The first of them appears below.

By GEORGES CLEMENCEAU.

THE NEW YORK TIMES has asked me for my impressions as a traveler in South America. I had no sooner promised them than a difficulty presented itself: I have no notes of my journey, and I should be sorry to have them, for it is annoying to record in black and white one's impressions as a witness to one's shortcomings at the precise moment when one feels them most vividly. And I pass over in silence the hours when it is wisdom to remain quiet.

The task of Christopher Columbus was facilitated by the fact that America was there, stationary, in the middle of the sea, only waiting for some one to knock against it. I even found in Brazil an eminent Senator for the State of St. Paul, Senhor Almeida Nogueira, who declared that the principal event of that Friday, Oct. 12, was the discovery of Europe in the person of the great Genoese, by the original Americans, who had this advantage over him—that they had not left their homes.

The most difficult work having been done, what was I going to discover in my turn at the risk of being myself discovered? Unknown countries, unheard-of peoples, virgin civilizations, or simply points of comparison for new judgments on myself and on my country?

Our self-satisfaction will not allow us, readily, to admit that we have anything to learn from young communities about whom we are too ready to talk in generalities. We cannot deny, however, that their first effort is fine, and that it tends continually toward success.

The least perspicacious of us must be interested in such a result. Facility of communication having multiplied the points of contact between the men of every country, one of our first needs is to rectify the vague or false conceptions of the different human societies, which this globe carries, in a tumult of joy and misery, toward unknown destinies.

Because there was no one to contradict them, travelers of ancient times were able to give full play to their wildest imaginings. A proverb even sanctions their lack of veracity, and when our good Herodotus related that the army of Xerxes dried up the rivers on its passage, the Athenians were not, perhaps, astonished.

Not as in Columbus's Day.

Christopher Columbus himself died in ignorance of the continent on which he had landed, convinced that he had reached the east coast of Asia. To-day it is another matter. From the poles to the torrid zone innumerable explorers are at work who only succeed in painfully discovering the new at the price of verification by their rivals.

The incidents which accompanied the probable discovery of the north pole by Commander Peary showed the danger of rash assertions, even when denial seemed only possible from seals and white bears.

I enjoy, happily, the great advantage of having discovered nothing. And as I am less ambitious of astonishing my contemporaries than of suggesting reflections by the way, I shall, perhaps, avoid offending the susceptibilities of those formidable savants who, having theorized upon everything have seen everything from the viewpoint of their studies.

Statisticians had better avoid me; I have nothing to tell them. Having no preconceived notions, I shall not attempt to make facts square with them. Having in mind Voltaire's expression that the most mischievous ignorance is that of the critic, I confess that my own criticism of old civilizations makes me indulgent toward new experiments outside Europe.

I am of my time and my country, and, at the end of a long career, the opinions and judgments which I have gained from them I submit with equanimity to the public. I do not share the prejudices current in Paris against the suburban dwellers of Villers-sur-Marne, or St. Cloud. Our comic journals and our plays have inflicted the same kind of torture upon the South Americans. Having ridiculed them for so long, has not the moment come when we should study them not merely to flatter ourselves at their expense but as a people, who, more than any other, are our intellectual children, and to ask ourselves whether we cannot, sometimes, learn something from them?

Future of South America.

It is not in three months that one acquires definite ideas as to the future of these vast territories, where the work of civilization is going on, which will inevitably change the political and social equilibrium of the planet that to-day is still entirely European.

It is always difficult to report faithfully what one has seen, for there is an art in seeing as in telling. Without claiming to have achieved it, I venture

Former Premier of France Gives a Delightful Account of His Impressions in Brazil and Argentina in a Series of Articles for The New York Times of Which This Is the First.

to hope that my observations, impartially recorded, will bear the seal of good faith and be of some use to the reader.

It is obvious that the towns of South America, though some of them are very fine and well laid out, cannot by reason of their recent history offer monuments comparable to those of Europe. One not infrequently hears a remark of this sort: "Have you seen that old church over there? It is at least forty or fifty years old." The towns derive their chief interest from their situation and surroundings; their internal features are only those which Europe has been pleased to send them in superabundance.

There remain the land and the people, two worthy subjects of study. The land, rich in undeveloped forces, calls for new energies. As it only becomes valuable by human labor, everything depends upon man's activity, since, in the depth of his soul, at once ingenuous and complex, are inscribed all the mysteries of the past, all the secrets of the future.

Admitting that American civilization is of recent origin, it must be said that the American peoples, far from suffering from growing pains, as we are fond of imagining, are really old races transplanted. Like us they bend under the weight of a heavy history of glory and human suffering; they are imbued with all our traditions, good or bad, and subject to the same difficulties, while they manifest their vital energies in an environment better adapted to their display.

Difference Between Two Americas.

Then again, let us not fail to distinguish between Latin America of the South, and Anglo-Saxon America of the North; as well as to refrain from generalities, sometimes unjustifiable, in regard to the parallel development of two orders of civilization, and the future destinies of old historic races which, in hours of crisis, may appear uncertain.

I shall only deal with Latin America, without, however, losing sight of the great Republic of the North, where I lived nearly four years.

Since neither Jefferson nor Washington foresaw the economic evolution which, in a little more than a hundred years, was to be realized by their infant Republic, it behooves me to be modest in my prophecies. But if I firmly believe that, in spite of the "historic materialism" of Karl Marx, commercial interests are not the only factors in civilization; if I take from an eminent writer in Brazil, Senhor Arinos de Mello, this curious information, that in 1780, at 1,400 kilometers from the coast, at the house of his great-grandfather, who had never seen the ocean, a company of amateurs played the tragedies of Voltaire, I must conclude that the influence of ideas, which we inherit from our forefathers, is not less certain or durable than that of international trade relations.

This I say with no intention to depreciate the importance of such commerce, which even at that time served as the vehicle of ideas—just as the good sailing ship transported a copy of Voltaire's "Mémoire" or "Mahomet" from Rotterdam to Pernambuco, and the train of mules which took a month to complete the journey; it should remind us that moral influences are not inferior in results to monetary considerations.

We have allowed ourselves to be outstripped in economic matters on too many points of the globe. Yet, notwithstanding our mistakes, our eighteenth century and the Revolution, which was its inevitable outcome, have constituted for us a patrimony of moral authority which we should seek not only to preserve but also, if possible, to enlarge.

I.

GENOA, June 30, 1 P. M.—The Regina Elena is in harbor. A great white boat vomits volumes of black smoke from its two funnels, while the siren sounds the familiar farewell. Two gangways, on which luggage and passengers are jostling desperately, present the peculiar spectacle of departing crowds. Under the dais of multi-colored sunshades the wide hats of beautiful Genoese women offer their good wishes to the little veiled toques of the travelers. People stop in the narrowest part of the gangway to laugh and cry together. The human flood vainly tries to break through the obstacle, and, according as the current is more or less violent, the living mass of feathers and ribbons is brought back to the landing place or pushed on to the deck, where it continues, in a perfect maze of movement and exclamations, to stop the traffic.

The Emigrant on Board.

Not far away the silent emigrant, heavily laden with nondescript burdens, forces his way to the lower deck, dragging old parents and young children after him. Do not imagine the emigrant leaving Italy for the Argentine to be the miserable human specimen whom we generally see. He is neither more nor less than a workman moving from one hemisphere to another. We shall meet him again on board. Strongly attached to family life, his peculiarity is to move about with his wife and progeny. The difference in seasons allows him, after

cutting corn in the Pampas, to return to Italy for the harvest. Often he settles down in the Argentine under the conditions which I shall explain later, and takes strong root there. Often, again, the love of his native land speaks louder than his love of adventure, and the steamship companies are pleased to profit by the circumstance.

The siren has blown its last authoritative blast. The last visitors have returned to land. The huge monster glides gently out to sea. One sees nothing but waving handkerchiefs and hears nothing but parting words. We are off. "Good-bye." The grand amphitheatre of white marble and sun-burnt stones glides slowly past us, dazzling in the warm light. Already our eyes were looking with curiosity and hopefulness toward the liquid plain. Are we flying from Europe, or is Europe flying from us? From this moment we shall look to see America surge up from the horizon on the day ordained, thanks to the beat of screws and the favor of the wind.

The first impressions of the boat were excellent; it is admirably fitted up; clean as a new pin; the attendance is good. We are welcomed in a most charming manner by the Captain, de Benedetti, a gallant young man, who advertises his French sympathies by flying a French flag. A fortnight in a handsome moving prison, with floods of salt air to fill one's lungs, and the marvelous panorama of sky and sea, shot with luminous arrows! Our daily promenades are those of prisoners condemned to walk in an eternal circle. As long as land is in sight our eyes linger on the blue line of mountains, which speaks to us of the country which, in spite of the revolving screw, our hearts refuse to leave.

On the Ligurian Coast.

The Ligurian coast, crowned by Alpine heights; Provence, rich in memories; blue mountains, darkened by the dying day; gray spots, which represent Toulon and Marseilles. A choppy, rather rough sea, complicated by a ground swell, tries the ladies, who had hitherto been very lively, as we crossed the Bay of Lyons. They retire to their cabins, whence issue sinister sounds. . . . But let us continue. To-morrow's sun will illumine the joyous hospitality of Barcelona.

Barcelona! Never did land look so fascinating to me. I have crossed the Atlantic eight times without ever feeling that kind of anticipated regret for the old Continent. Youth longs for the Unknown, but age learns to fear it.

The passengers lunched off the boat. Then came a visit to the Rambla, and

and deserted, under the gray sky. We linger over our first letters home, which can neither be called letters from abroad nor letters of farewell.

A cab carries us about in a haphazard way, past modern houses which are a disgrace to Spain and our epoch, and past façades of convents burnt down in the last revolution. Finally, we are driven back to the quay, where, since morning, a crowd of fruit sellers, picturesquely attired in red and yellow, have been selling their wares to the emigrants, who are forbidden by the regulations to land at the ports of call. Nets attached to long poles, filled with provisions of all sorts, are offered to the passengers on the lower decks and held at a safe distance until the price, which has been volubly disputed, falls into the outstretched apron below. But the signal is given. The teeming market disappears, and, without more ado, we put out to sea. In the dusk of the evening we discern the white summits of the Sierra Nevada, in whose shadow lie Granada and the Alhambra. We shall pass Gibraltar in the night, and at dawn to-morrow we shall have only the blue monotony of the infinite sea before us.

En Route to St. Vincent.

It is five days' steam to St. Vincent from the Cape Verde Islands. The passengers shake down and group themselves according to national or professional affinities. Stretched on armchairs of excessive size, which turn the daily walk into a steepclimb, fair ladies, wrapped in shawls and gauzes, and profoundly indifferent to the comfort of others, try to read, but only succeed in yawning. They chatter aimlessly without really conversing. The cries of children are a positive entertainment, and a badly trained dog a fruitful topic for discussion. The men sit down to bridge or smoke innumerable pipes in the Winter Garden. I catch scraps of business talk around me.

The boldest foot it on the deck, but their enterprise does not please the gentler passengers, who are in quiet possession of the only space available for exercise. Soon, under the guise of sops to the ravenous ocean appetite, piles of plates, glasses, and decanters, complicated with stools and traveling rugs, incur the passage-way, and as the soft roll of the ship causes a certain disturbance of the crockery, the pedestrian, young or old, has always a chance of breaking his leg—a contingency to which the ladies appear to be perfectly indifferent. The piano suffers cruelly from sharp raps administered by knotty juvenile fingers. An Italian lady sings, and one of my own

countrywomen sketches a group of emigrants.

In the primitive setting of the steerage everybody is already at home, and appears happy. Attentive fathers walk and play with their offspring, and occasionally smack them by way of showing them the right path. Mothers are nursing their babies, or washing clothes. I am told that there are no fewer than twenty-six nursing mothers out of a total of 600 third-class passengers on board. From amid the Italian swarm brightly colored groups of Syrians stand out. The women, tattooed, painted, and clad in light-colored draperies, sometimes covered with silver ornaments, fall naturally into the dignified and statuesque pose of the Oriental. A few are really handsome, with a sort of passive sensuality of bearing. It is said that the Syrians are the licensed peddlers of the Pampas. A visit to the steerage shows that the ventilation is good, and that cleanliness is insured by incessant application of the hose. The sick bay is well kept. One or two patients are in the maternity ward awaiting an interesting event before the equator can be reached. The food is wholesome and abundant. The Italian Government keeps a permanent official on board, who is independent of the officers of the ship, and sees that the regulations concerning hygiene and safety for this class of passengers are rigorously carried out. Frightful abuses in former days necessitated these measures, which are now entirely efficacious.

Help from Wireless.

We are looking forward to calling at St. Vincent as a welcome break in the monotony of our days. However, thanks to wireless telegraphy, we are no longer cut off from the world on this highly perfected raft, which balances our destinies between heaven and sea. One cannot help feeling surprised when presented with an envelope bearing the word "Telegram." Some one has sent me his good wishes for the voyage from France by way of Dakar. Then the passengers of a ship we shall meet to-morrow wave their hats to us in advance by the same mysterious medium. On several occasions I have had the pleasure of receiving messages of this sort, which are incidents in a day. From time to time we can read the dispatches of the news agencies posted in the saloon. I leave you to imagine how, with our abundant leisure, we discuss the news. From St. Vincent to the Island of Fernando Noronha, the advanced post of Brazil, I do not think we were ever more than two days out of range of wireless telegraphy. When it is compulsory to have a wireless in-

stallation on board all ships, collisions at sea can never occur.

I visited the telegraph office situated forward on the upper deck. It is a small cabin where an employe sits all day evoking sparks from his machine as messages arrive from all parts of the horizon; the sound reminds me of the crackling of a distant mitrailleuse. One must not allow the mind to wander even to watch the smoke of a cigarette. Through a technical blunder, our unfortunate telegraphist, without knowing it, sent the information to Montevideo that we were in danger. In consequence, on our arrival, we learned from the newspapers that the Government was sending a state ship to our help. We thus experienced the sweet sensation of perils incurred without danger, while the employe who was guilty of the error found himself dismissed.

We shall not profit by the call at St. Vincent, since we arrive in the night. It is in vain that they tell us that the Cape Verde Islands are nothing but a series of arid, yellow rocks; that St. Vincent can show only commonplace houses and cabins with the inevitable coconut trees; that the "town" is inhabited only by negroes, who pick up a living from the ships that put in here to coal, while the English coal importers, and real masters of this Portuguese possession, live up in the hills; nevertheless, we are disappointed of an opportunity to stroll on shore toward some clump of trees, which was apparently planted there with the object of justifying the name of the Cape—in reality, a most barren spot.

The Sterile Canaries.

On our way, we passed the denuded rocks, which somebody tells us are called the Canaries. St. Vincent, it seems, is a second edition of the Canaries—only more sterile. I have no difficulty in believing it when at nightfall the Regina Elena stops at the bottom of a deep black hole dotted with distant lights, of which some are fixed to the bows of small craft or tugboats drawing coal lighters, which dance up to us on the waves.

Suddenly, as in the third act of "L'Africaine," under the orders of an invisible Nelusko, we are invaded on the starboard and port side by a dual horde of savages. They are fearful-looking blacks, with grinning masks, clothed in coal dust, who swarm like monkeys up the shrouds and fall on deck with the laugh of cannibals. We are assured that our lives are not in danger, and, in fact, they are no sooner among us than, attacked with sudden timidity, they offer in a low voice, and in a language in which French and English are strongly mixed, an assortment of coconuts, bananas, and bags made of melon seeds, to which they appear to attach great importance.

Meanwhile, on the lighters, their fellows are at work shooting coal into the bunkers, in the midst of a hurricane of fine black dust, which in spite of closed doors and portholes finds its way into the remotest corners of our cabins and effects. It will require at least a day to restore the Regina Elena, by means of the hose pipe, to her pristine whiteness. How describe the condition of our clothes and what they cover? The sea itself might pass over them without washing away the stain.

Once more we fall back on the small events of our daily life on board, of which the principal is to find the point in the southern horizon by which the speed of the ship can be calculated, under given conditions of wind and tide. On the voyage to New York the Americans make of this detail an excuse for a daily bet. I notice that the South Americans are less addicted to this form of sport.

The first impressions made upon me by these South American families with whom I am thus thrown in daily contact is eminently favorable. Simplicity, dignity, and graciousness are what I see. I find none of the extravagance ascribed to them by rumor. Only on one point am I led to make a criticism: their children seem to enjoy the utmost license of speech and action.

Henceforth, our only subject of conversation is the probable date on which we shall cross the equator. The Regina Elena, with a displacement of 10,000 tons, did 17 knots on her trials. If she makes 14 or 15 now, we are satisfied. The sea is calm; not a stomach protests. In these latitudes the storms of the North Atlantic are unknown. We shall have made the crossing from Barcelona to Buenos Ayres in some fifteen or sixteen days. A long spell of restful quiet for the man who goes out toward a busy, changeable life.

A Picturesque Sea.

We amuse ourselves with watching troops of dolphins, divine creatures, passing from the joys of the air to those of the sea with a facile grace. What legends have been created about these mammals, which from the most ancient times have been the friends of the seafarer! They save the shipwrecked, and surrender to the charms of music. According to the Homeric song, it was from the dolphin that Apollo borrowed the disguise in which he led the Cretan fishermen to the shores of Delphi, where his temple was later built. How true to life is the undulating line of the bas-reliefs on the monument of Lyciscatus in which the

Tyrrhenian pirates, transformed into dolphins, fling themselves into the ocean, as though in feverish haste to try a new life! Souvenirs of this old tale surge in my brain until I hear a voice saying harshly:

"All these filthy beasts ought to be killed with dynamite, for they destroy the nets of the fishermen."

Good-bye to poetic legend! The friendship between man and the dolphin ends in utilitarian holocausts!

As yet, civilization makes no common cause with flying fish. We may therefore enjoy to our fill the spectacle of flocks of sea grasshoppers, sweeping through the air to escape the jaws of their greedy ocean compatriots, and making great white oases in the deep blue plain. They bring to mind the adventure that befell the sailor who found a ready credence for his tale of finding one of the shoes of the horses of the army of Pharaoh, drowned in the Red Sea in the wake of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses, whilst his account of the flying fish he had seen was received with incredulity! So many tales have been told that it is not always easy to know where to express surprise.

Near the Equator.

A daily increasing and heavy heat meets us as we draw near the line. The light flannel suit is brought out. The fat acknowledge, gasping, that breathing becomes difficult. We are in the black pot; the skies low, heavy with iron gray clouds; an intermittent fine rain which cools nothing; a glassy sea; no breeze stirring. It feels like the interior of a baker's oven. We take refuge in the dangerous electric fan, which is unequalled for adding a bad cold to the disagreeable sensation of suffocation.

Of the famous ceremony of christening the passenger who crosses the line for the first time nothing subsists. The inoffensive performance is now converted into a dance, with a subscription for the crew. Passengers on the lower deck waited every evening with far less ceremony, to the strains of an accordion, varying the entertainment by playing at "morra," the national game. For this they stand in couples and aim at each other's faces terrific blows with their fists, accompanying each movement with savage cries.

If you watch carefully you will find that in this game of fistcuffs the fist is stopped just in time, and at the same moment a certain number of fingers are shot out. Simultaneously a voice cries a number, always less than ten, and the game consists in trying to announce beforehand how many fingers have been pointed by the two partners.

This sport, which has the advantage of requiring no tools other than those we all carry about with us, is a great favorite with the Italians. Often, in the early morning, I used to hear from my berth an alarming barking in the direction of the bows, which seemed to be the beginning of a deadly quarrel, but was in reality merely the fun of the "morra."

Fernando Noronha, Brazilian territory, is now in sight. It is a volcanic island three days off Rio de Janeiro. Successive streams of lava have formed peak after peak with strangely jagged outlines. A wide opening in the mountain leaves to view the shining sea on the opposite shore of the island. Three lofty telegraph poles stand out among the foliage. They say that these posts were set there by Frenchmen. Good luck to them!

Capt. de Benedetti pays me the compliment of celebrating the 14th of July. The Queen's portrait is framed in the flags of the two nations. In the evening we had champagne and drank healths. An Italian Senator, Admiral de Brochetti, expresses in well-chosen language his friendly appreciation of the friendship of France, and I in turn echo his good wishes for the sister nation.

An Equatorial Night.

In the exhaustion of the equatorial night, is there any better relief from insomnia than a solitary walk beneath the starry firmament of the Southern Hemisphere? Naturally, I sought the Southern Cross as soon as it had risen above the horizon. Another disillusionment caused by an exaggerated reputation. Where are Ye, O! Great Bear and Pleiades, and where the Belt of Orion? On the other hand, words fail me to describe the alpha of Argo. Every morning, between 3 and 4 o'clock, I see on the port side a sort of huge blue diamond which appears to lean out of the celestial vault toward the black gulf of the restless sea, as if to illumine its abysses. It caused me the most powerful sensation of living light which the firmament has ever given to me. If indeed there be in any part of infinite space some prodigious altar of celestial fire, believe me, that fire is Canopus. It was assuredly there that Prometheus stole the heavenly spark with which he kindled in us the light of life. There, too, Vesta watches over the eternal hearth of sacred fire in which is concentrated a more divine splendor than even that of a tropical sun.

But now the earth calls us back to herself, or, rather, it is the stormy ocean that rouses us, for as we approach the immense estuary of La Plata a tempest of icy wind suddenly blows upon us. This is the Pampero, the south wind, the wind from the Pampas, which blows straight from the frozen crests of the Andes. A heavy swell makes the Regina Elena roll in the great yellow waves, for already the clay of the Rio de la Plata makes itself clearly perceptible in the sea and gives it the aspect of a vast ocean of mud. To-morrow morning we shall be in Montevideo.

*Here the cold comes from the south.



M. Georges Clemenceau, Former Premier of France.